



Touchpoints and Child Care Quality Improvement: Reports from the Nationwide Brazelton Touchpoints Network

The purpose of the Early Care and Education (ECE) initiative is to work with existing systems and organizations dedicated to quality care to optimize the developmental potential of children. We do so by optimizing the health and functioning of relationships surrounding the care and education of young children in the shared caregiving environment. Central to this purpose are to:

- Nurture, renew and professionalize ECE providers
- Enhance developmentally informed and appropriate child care
- Strengthen family functioning

Touchpoints promotes these goals as the foundation of a child's capacity to learn across the domains of development (social, emotional, cognitive and motor). In doing so, Touchpoints informs and promotes standards of quality in early care and education. Members of the Brazelton Touchpoints network have reported on the relevance and effectiveness of the Touchpoints Approach in meeting quality improvement goals and criteria in ECE settings. Examples include the following:

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT APPLICATIONS

- **NAEYC**

Members of the Brazelton Touchpoints network report that Touchpoints is an effective tool in implementing NAEYC standards. The NAEYC program standards promoting positive relationships among all children and adults within the overall family and community-based system, can be seen as most relevant to the areas where the Touchpoints Approach can be, and has been, applied in quality settings. Specifically, the Touchpoints Relational Framework is a system of practical application of communication strategies designed to promote supportive, collaborative relationships among families and providers. The Touchpoints Developmental Framework applied in ECE settings enriches additional NAEYC program standards—including Curriculum, Teaching, and Assessment of Progress—by enhancing developmentally and culturally appropriate teaching knowledge and practices. Furthermore, the Touchpoints Approach fosters strength-based, collaborative support across systems, leadership, and management surrounding the care of young children.

- **High/Scope Perry Preschool Study**

The Touchpoints Approach is relevant to achieving the quality standards set by the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study. The study exemplifies educational criteria and staff-to-child ratios for optimal programming, as well



as a participatory model of education, recommendations for staff development, criteria for supervision in understanding child development, and high involvement of families.

Toward the implementation of these kinds of criteria and goals, the Touchpoints Developmental Framework informs developmentally appropriate practice in a manner that enhances standard knowledge of developmental milestones, and enriches teacher appreciation and understanding of social and emotional needs and agenda, offering specific practices to support children's developmental potential a teacher's understanding of variation in children's temperament and individual needs. In addition, the Touchpoints Relational Framework works in conjunction with program criteria for family involvement and offers concrete strategies for building strong alliances with families.

- **Early Head Start and Head Start**

The Touchpoints Approach has proven application to the Early Head Start and Head Start performance standards. As exemplified by ongoing work conducted by BTC and the Early Head Start and Head Start Bureaus in a number of tribal communities, Touchpoints guiding principles of practice have been assisting providers in implementing Head Start Performance Standards—including those regarding Education and Early Childhood Development, Child Mental Health, Family Partnerships, and Parent Involvement. The Touchpoints Approach offers Head Start providers the opportunity to build on their knowledge of child development and develop more collaborative, interactive, and strength-based relationships with families.

- **NC 5-STAR Quality Enhancement System**

Touchpoints has been used successfully in application to the NC 5-STAR Quality Enhancement System. Specifically, Touchpoints has been infused into technical assistance at Onslow County, NC Partnership for Children, which is part of the Brazelton Touchpoints network. They report that the Touchpoints Relational Framework has assisted the county's initiatives in (1) providing Quality Enhancement technical assistance and (2) strengthening the relational functioning between early care and education front-line staff and their technical assistance/quality enhancement consultants. The team reports that among the key lessons learned from inclusion of the Touchpoints approach are strategies for keeping the technical assistance relationship as a priority in the service of long-term, meaningful change and enhanced quality in developmental and family-centered practice.

- **Smart Start Colorado**

Touchpoints has proven successful in delivering technical assistance as part of Smart Start Colorado, the ECE systems initiative in Colorado. The



Early Childhood Council of Larimer County is a partner in Smart Start and part of the Touchpoints team in Colorado. They have incorporated Touchpoints into professional development training and technical assistance for childcare programs that participate in various quality improvement activities. The team reports that the Touchpoints Approach has given them the methodology for relationship building skills—both between the Technical Assistance consultants and their sites, and at the state systems level. The approach has provided a strength-based model of implementation and building relational skills for communication across agencies and policy-makers.

- **Pennsylvania Keystone STARS system**

Touchpoints has been integrated in practice to meet performance standards for quality in child care in Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS system. The Keystone STARS System of Continuous Quality Improvement for Learning Programs is aimed to improve quality in child care across Pennsylvania. The Touchpoints team at Wilkes-Barre reports that the Touchpoints Approach enhances participation in the Keystone STARS system. Specifically, Touchpoints offers strategies in two competencies that are promoted under the Keystone STARS system: applied understanding of child development and strengthening support of families. The Wilkes-Barre team also reports that the application of Touchpoints skills has been an effective way of helping ECE staff to meet Keystone STARS performance standards regarding parent inclusion in communication and programs, as well as standards regarding leadership and management. Most significantly, this has been through the implementation of Touchpoints in Reflective Practice mentorship materials and technical assistance from the Brazelton Touchpoints Center.

OTHER APPLICATIONS

- **Higher Education of ECE Providers**

For example, the Touchpoints Approach has been incorporated in the undergraduate and graduate Early Childhood degree coursework at University of North Carolina. This level of infusion of the Touchpoints Approach into the training of early care and educators has added to the university's mission of deepening the professionalization of ECE providers.

- **State Funding for Touchpoints Training**

In 1999, a Smart Start, North Carolina collaborative with the Brazelton Touchpoints Center provided substantial support for BTC's efforts in creating and adapting the Touchpoints Approach to early care and education. Since that time, additional Touchpoints teams have been founded in NC; thus increasing access for providers in North Carolina to pursue Touchpoints training that is government funded through Smart Start.



The Touchpoints Early Care and Education initiative, under the leadership of Dr. Jayne Singer, is an adaptation of the Brazelton Touchpoints Approach to be responsive to the unique needs of ECE providers. The initiative was undertaken at the request of early care providers working directly with children and their families. It was spearheaded by a working group of providers, outside experts, members of the Touchpoints national network and parent focus groups.

Brazelton Touchpoints Center®
1295 Boylston Street • Suite 320
Boston, MA 02215
(857)218-4451

www.touchpoints.org